

**Keep Your Relationship Strong While Parenting**  
**Mountain View Public Library**  
**February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2012 (revised 08/23/12)**

**Myths/Realities:**

Myth 1: Having kids will make us happy

Reality 1: Data show that generally relationship satisfaction decreases for parents especially for the first years with children.

Myth2: We'll stay together for the kids

Reality 2: In order to parent well, the parents need a good relationship.

Myth 3: It will get better when. . .

Reality 3: You can make things better now and things may get even better in the future.

Myth 4: The problem isn't our relationship, the kids just bring us so much stress.

Reality 4: Parenting is a training ground for problem solving skills.

Myth 5: Working at a job is harder than staying home with the kids.

Reality 5: Staying at home with the kids is often harder/more stressful than working a full day at work

**Normalization:**

Though you may not talk about it with other parents, the challenges that you may be facing while parenting are common experiences.

There is nothing wrong with you, your partner, or your kids just because parenting makes it hard to have a strong relationship.

**Long Term Tips**

Authoritative Parenting: Listen to the kids and hear their side. Reserve final decision for the parents.

Decrease Gender Roles: Tag team child care, taking care of elders, and shared household chores

Get the Past into the Past:

*Hold Me Tight* (see books)

conversation 5: Forgiving Injuries

Don't say sorry until they know you feel their pain

Make a plan to prevent problems in the future

If you're hurt, try acceptance (not for violence or infidelity)

Get Vulnerable:

Share positive and negative feelings

Share your needs that aren't getting met

Share yourself unconditionally

Emphasize the Positive

Stop sharing what bothers you

Share your appreciation for what your partner does

Don't be afraid to start small

Accept What Won't Change:

Desires about sex, cleanliness, spending, and other personality traits rarely match perfectly.

Grow Your Own Growth: The only capacity you have to change your relationship is to change your own behavior.

## Short Term Tips

Daily check-in with open-ended questions,  
How was your day? What is  
happening tomorrow for you? What  
are your hopes?  
... direct response to partner,  
Hearing about what is going on for  
you I feel \_\_\_\_\_.  
... and supportive statements  
How can I support you? What do  
you need from me? I have  
confidence in you because \_\_\_\_\_, and  
saying "I love you."

### Date Ideas:

Popcorn & library movie  
Museum free days  
Swap dates with another couple  
Volunteer together  
Hiking  
Daytime dates

### Do Something New Together:

Classes  
Vacation  
Read  
Begin a new TV series  
Pretend to be tourists  
Try a new restaurant  
Cook together  
Join a gym  
.. just do something new

### The Best Aphrodisiac

Boredom + Time together=Aphrodisiac

## Resources

### Books:

Burns, David D. (2008). *Feeling Good Together*.  
Gottman, John & Silver, Nan (1999). *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*.  
Johnson, Sue (2008). *Hold Me Tight – Seven Conversations for a Lifetime of Love*.  
Schnarch, David (1997). *Passionate Marriage: Keeping Love & Intimacy Alive in Committed Relationships*.

### Therapy:

Don't wait too long. Therapy is more effective early.

### Sliding Scale Clinics

- Community Center for Health and Wellness, 408-493-5006, Palo Alto
- Community Health Awareness Council, 650-965-2020, Mountain View
- JFK Counseling Center, 408-524-4900, Sunnyvale
- Community Counseling Services of Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County, 408-325-5116, San Jose

### Therapist Finders

- American Psychological Association, [www.locator.apa.org](http://www.locator.apa.org)
- The Relationship Counseling Center, [relationshipcounselingcenter.org](http://relationshipcounselingcenter.org)
- SCCPA, [www.sccpa.org](http://www.sccpa.org)
- [PsychologyToday.com](http://PsychologyToday.com)

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How many hours per week do you spend in the following activities?

|                                      | Now | Goal After This Sheet |
|--------------------------------------|-----|-----------------------|
| <b>Household Chores</b>              |     |                       |
| <b>Maintaining your relationship</b> |     |                       |
| <b>Parenting</b>                     |     |                       |
| <b>Sleep</b>                         |     |                       |
| <b>Spiritual Practice/Community</b>  |     |                       |
| <b>Volunteering</b>                  |     |                       |
| <b>Watching TV</b>                   |     |                       |
| <b>Work/School (include travel)</b>  |     |                       |

Of the activities listed above, which represent your highest values? Circle the top 3. Do those parts of your life take up more of your time than the other parts of your life?

What are you willing to give up so that you will have more time to maintain and develop your relationship? How much time will that give you?

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What will you do during the new time you have made that will maintain and develop your relationship?

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What can you do that might help free your partner up to spend more of his or her time maintaining the relationship?

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Is there anything that you are currently doing separately that you could do together?

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What do you most want to remember from this worksheet.

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